

# Voice of protest by alan brinkley

[History](#)



and Section # of Brinkley's view on Coughlin and Long Two s of high relevance in the 1930s' political scene were those of Father Charles Edward Coughlin, and Huey Pierce Long. Coughlin was a Catholic priest who later became a political leader in the 1930s. Owing to his radical and at times bordering on anti-Semitic ideas, he was often the subject of great scrutiny and criticism, with his broadcasts on radio being the subject of great controversy. Coughlin used radio to communicate with his followers, a mass following of millions, and owing to the contents of his speeches many radios channels refused to broadcast them. Eventually, his show was called off air and his movement slowly disintegrated. Coughlin aimed to bring about monetary reform in an attempt to bring the country out of the economic slump it was caught in after and during the great depression. He aimed to do this through international banking reforms, and created a party called the "Nation's Union of Social Justice". As mentioned, Coughlin and the party had millions of followers, but rather than this being evidence of his success as a leader, it was a point used against him by critics, who viewed him as a dictatorial demagogue with radical views and ideas who had no room to be in the political scene of America. Meanwhile, Long was the governor of Louisiana and later a U. S. Senator noted especially for his radical policies related particularly to the redistribution of wealth, which would be implemented through taxes that corporations would have to pay. This was in an attempt to curb the damage the Great Depression had caused and eradicate the widespread poverty and despair in the nation. Highly charismatic and influential, and highly critical of certain government agencies, Long had a great number of highly devoted followers, leading many critics to pan him as a dictatorial demagogue, illustrating the first of <https://assignbuster.com/voice-of-protest-by-alan-brinkley/>

many similarities between him and Coughlin. However while most critics have viewed the two as fascistic demagogues, Brinkley viewed them as a modern response to the critical situation of the time, bringing to America a solution for the Great Depression, rather than contributing to the deadlock that was prevalent at the time. As Brinkley saw it, they were both speaking on behalf of the people, pointing fingers at the actual root cause of the problem, which they saw as the rich and corrupt elite of the nation, whether they were industrialists or politicians. Furthermore, Brinkley points out that while most leaders at the time relied on racial value to generate supporters and campaigns, particularly in the South, Huey Long did not resort to those strategies and rather used political debate and strategy to point out the flaws in the upper class and the politicians who had done little to bring the nation out of the Great Depression. On the other hand, Brinkley defends Coughlin by pointing out that he only resorted to religious bias after he withdrew from the public eye. At the height of his political power, he displayed very little, if any, religious bias. I did find this view of Brinkley's persuasive because he basically managed to explain the reason the country did not fall apart or under a worse dictator, as happened in many European countries that were going through a state of economic crisis. There were leaders like Coughlin and Long who did not assemble followers for the sake of power or influence, but rather to combat the problem at hand and bring the country back to a position of economic stability. They did not exploit the people, rather simply told them the situation as it was and urged them to change it, for their own sake. Whether they were seen as extremists or fascistic is another issue, but the fact of the matter is, that they managed to be two political leaders who were actually working for the people, rather

<https://assignbuster.com/voice-of-protest-by-alan-brinkley/>

than many others at the time, who were only working to benefit themselves, thereby gaining, in my eyes, a considerable position in American political history. The two had different views of bringing it about, but both eventually were focusing on America's economic decline and refused to watch the political leaders of the time bide their time away without doing anything to improve the situation. Had Long not been assassinated and Coughlin's show not called off air, perhaps the situation would have escalated into a frenzy, but as it never did, one cannot be sure that the two were indeed the dictatorial demagogues that many critics view them as. Indeed as Brinkley views them, perhaps they were simply two radical leaders who aimed to work for the people, rather than for their own interests, and who urged them to take control of the reigns and channel them into a positive direction.

References Alan Brinkley, *Voices of Protest: Huey Long, Father Coughlin, & the Great Depression* Vintage. 1983